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Vol. 10 No. 5

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May 2025

Natick's Farmers Market Still a Classic Hit

By Sean Sullivan

Strumming at the Common Street Spiritual Center early last month, a guitarist was singing his cover of "Up On A Roof."

The classic song by "The Drifters" is an ode to the power of place and presence, and seemed well suited to its audience and the main attraction— Natick's Farmers Market.

The weekly event has sheltered inside the center since the onset of winter, but will reemerge outdoors on the Natick Common early this month. Opening day is slated for Saturday, May 3rd.

When The Drifters in 1962 sang about their special place at the top of the stairs, it was in celebration of solitude. The town's long-running Farmers Market in contrast, is a tribute to community.

The impulse to seek both (private and public life) may seem in tension, but in fact are often one side of the same coin. Like exercise and rest, each in its own way rejuvenates and de-



pletes, necessitating the other.

For those seeking a respite from their alone time, the Farmers Market is just the thing. It's a reliable occasion where locals can reconnect with neighbors, network and be among others. Or, it could be also that at-

tendees are just looking for some fresh carrots.

Over 60 food vendors are

slated to sell at the market over the summer, said Deb Sayre. She's the mastermind behind the market, which is now in its 26th year. Natick's is one of the few that run year-round, she added.

Sayre hosted the inaugural

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Natick Overrides Tax Cap, But Not Incumbents

By Sean Sullivan

In Natick's annual March elections, the town's much-debated tax override passed by a margin of nearly 20 percentage points.

Passage of the measure will allow the town to increase property taxes on residents and other stakeholders. Absent such an override, Massachusetts law limits the amount a municipality may increase such taxes annually.

That state ceiling is set at a 2.5% bump per year in addition to new growth, yet the override will allow Natick to surpass that limit.

Debate surrounding the proposed override turned contentious in public meetings, with some residents voicing a preference for fiscal austerity in lieu of a tax hike. Opponents to the override cited its impact on homeowners, who are already coping with household inflation.

Older residents on fixed incomes might also be acutely vulnerable to the tax increase, critics of the measure said. Others claimed the override's boost in property taxes could also put Natick homes out of reach for potential buyers who are younger and for those with lower incomes.

In a roadside spot outside Natick's Community Senior Center on voting day, Donna McKenzie propped up a sign in each hand. The yellow posters affixed to both bore her name, advertisements for her bid for a spot on Natick's School Committee.

The sign in McKenzie's right hand did double duty. Riding atop her name was another placard, one that read "Yes on 1." That was the number assigned to the override vote, the only ballot question put before voters that March 25th day.

"I am of a mind that there is not much more in the budget that they can cut without harming the students," said McKenzie. She was referring to the town's school

> **OVERRIDES** *continued on page 3*



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WILLIAM RAVEIS



FARMERS MARKET

continued from page 1

event decades ago, a community staple that's since grown by leaps and bounds in size and popularity. That first farmer's market a quarter century ago was a simple sidewalk show of local talent and goods.

It was held just outside the doors of Debsan paint company, long a neighborhood landmark. Sayre is the "Deb" in Debsan, some will know, whose father named the company after her and a sibling.

A roster of local crafters is also slated to share space those dozens of food vendors this summer. As the market's grown so much, Sayre manages it with the help of a crew of volunteers.

As she sung the market's praises, one of those volunteers checked in to make sure all was well.

"He makes the coffee," she said, introducing him as Charlie, who she added is a local attorney. "Because I make mad coffee."

Her crew of volunteers tends to be long-timers, said Sayre.

"They just stayed because they love the market."

For sellers, proof of the market's popularity can be found in the receipts. There's often a line to check out at its vegetable vendors during sunny summer Saturdays.

"I would say that the majority of farms that come with us, stay."

A stubborn chill was in the air one Saturday early last month, as several of those vendors sold from their spreads within the halls of the spiritual center overlooking Natick's





Common. A few degrees cooler, and the light drizzle outside might have turned to snow.

Yet a rainbow of locally-grown vegetables still spilled out from wooden crates, mostly of the rooted variety. Neighboring tables hosted an assortment of market mainstays that stamp the event with its character—snacks and candles (handcrafted and poured) among them.

A few feet away, a team of medical students from Regis College has set up a station, conducting health screenings for interested passersby. They could be seen squeezing the bulb of a blood-pressure gauge that tightened around a subject's arm now and then.

"It's a multipurpose event," said Sayre. "It seems to be a community connector."

In addition to genres, those community connections span generations. Even during winter, vendors are plentiful enough to spill over from the spiritual center's street level, down into its basement.

"I'm delighted that every year we have more and more young people," said Sayre.

Ten-year-old Olivia Raskin was among the many sellers on that Saturday. Her trade is "The Barking Bakery," a small business she runs out of her house.

"I decided to start it because my dogs were always hungry," she said. That prompted experimentation with different recipes, and the baked dog treats that ultimately resulted.

Raskin said she'd joined the market almost on whim, calling Sayre to see if there were any open spots.

"She said they had room for me today."



OVERRIDES

continued from page 1

system tightening its belt in recent years, citing that Natick schools had shaved about \$2,000,000 during that time.

"I went to all Natick schools," as a student, said McKenzie. "These are our kids and we owe them. All three of us are yes votes."

She shared space in their roadside spot with Natick residents Jaymin Patel and Amy Hille. The two were running for School Committee and Town Meeting spots respectively.

Patel's daughter attends a Natick preschool, and he cited the need to support public education as a main reason for supporting the override.

"We're fighting for the future here," he said, propping up a sign a of his own that advertised his candidacy.

In favor of the override, Hille spoke about her concern for quality-of-life issues in the town. She pointed to potential cuts in services and infrastructure maintenance, should the ballot measure be voted down.

"This pothole brought to you



by 'No on Question 1,'" she said. Patel would go on to win his bid for a School Committee seat, while McKenize fell short in that contest. Hille also did not earn enough votes to become a member of Town Meeting.

Competing with Hille for a slot in that Precinct 7 race was Bruce Evans, who garnered the highest percentage of votes in that election. Evans was also in the running for re-election to Natick's Select Board, a bid that was also successful in the March vote.

Speaking shortly after the elections, Evans reiterated his support for the override. He pointed also to those potential cuts in services, infrastructure and schools that will now be averted with the passage of Question 1.

That said, Evans said the town will continue to cut costs wherever it makes sense to do so.

"We need to continue to get better," he said. "We need to find our way to efficiently manage our resources."

Also on the deliberative docket of the Select Board and other town officials, are the implications of policy from a national and even global perspective. Disruptions in federal funding, tourism and trade can take a hefty toll on small communities.

"There's so much uncertainty in the economy right now," said Evans. "What are the cuts of the Department of Education going to mean for our schools? We're trying to figure out what's happening with all the things swirling around Washinton."

And amid that environment, there are also the challenges and projects that continue apace in Natick's own backyard.

Among the big ones, Evans cited the new Memorial School project, and the planned overhaul of the town's interchange at Routes 9 and 27. Attracting new businesses to Natick also made his list of priorities.

Evans will no longer serve as the Select Board's Vice Chair in his new 3-year term, as the governing body's makeup is rotated post-election. The board wastes little time in the wake of voters having their say. The night after the election, a "reorganization meeting" occurs, one that determines the titles and roles of the new Select Board.

Kathryn Coughlin was reelected to a second term in the March contests, and will retain her role as Chair. Linda Wollschlager was chosen to serve as its new Vice Chair.

"It makes a stronger board when you rotate it around," said Evans. "I'm pretty pleased with the makeup of this board."

All five members of the executive body are volunteer positions, and each member's workload can approximate a full-time occupation. Asked why he does it, Evans turned reflective.

"Sometimes, you really shake your head." But "All of us doing this are in it for the right reasons. We're in it to solve problems. What makes the most sense for the most people in town."



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Friends of Natick Trails

Natick Trail Mail is a monthly email from the Friends of Natick Trails to share news, opportunities and stories about trails in Natick. You're receiving this because you've connected with us in the past - but it's easy to opt out (see below).

Who is FoNT?

The Friends of Natick Trails was established in 2016 to help support the Town of Natick's work to bring about the Cochituate Rail Trail. Our mission is:

To promote outdoor recreation and alternative transportation within our community and to encourage and support collaboration within and between communities to ensure the safe enjoyment of the trail network for all users and neighbors.

FoNT is a non-profit organization with a fiscal sponsor, Mission. Earth.

Get involved!

Become a FoNT member

	vided over \$150,000 to the Town volunteers. Learn more and sign	
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Want to be part of FoNT? We are member-based, and we welcome you to join us! There is no commitment to membership, but we hope you will participate if you support the FoNT mission. We have several ways for volunteers to engage, such as our Trail Keepers program to maintain and improve the CRT, and we have a number of committees where members can also participate. Sign up here and we will get back to you!

Our Board of Directors

We occasionally have vacancies on our Board of Directors. Do you have experience or interest in serving on a Board? We are particularly interested in people with legal, fundraising and policy skills and experience. Sign up here and we will follow up right away.

Sponsorship Opportunities

Since 2021, FoNT has provided over \$190,000 to the Town

of Natick for maintenance and improvements to the Cochituate Rail Trail. These funds come from sponsorships of various amenities along the trail, such as benches and bike repair stations, and we also plan programs and events that can be supported by underwriting. MathWorks, Landry's, Middlesex Bank, TJX, MetroWest Subaru and Sincere are among the companies that have supported the CRT. If you, or your organization would like to participate, please visit this page or email info@friendsofnaticktrails.org.

All Aboard!

In partnership with the Town of Natick Recreation and Parks Department, FoNT helps run All Aboard, a program to make cycling accessible to riders with disabilities or mobility limitations. All Aboard is scheduled on five Saturdays in 2025, starting on April 12. This free program is funded by grants, and relies on volunteers. Learn more and sign

up to ride or help out here. All Aboard is supported by grants from the MetroWest Health Foundation, the MathWorks Community Foundation, and the Rotary Club of Natick.

Trail News

Since the Natick section of the Cochituate Rail Trail opened in 2021, the CRT has been a popular amenity and transportation corridor from Saxonville Village in Framingham to Whitney Field in Natick, with over 600,000 visits. And it's poised to get even better.

> • In 2025, the trail will extend from its current terminus near Whitney Field to the outbound platform of the new Natick Center MBTA Station after the accessibility improvements at the station are complete. There will be covered bike parking at the trailhead.

• MassDOT is constructing a path along Route 9 from the CRT to Hartford and Speen Streets, making the trail more accessible to West Natick. Called Lake Cochituate Path, this project is anticipated to be built starting in 2026.

• Natick is designing an extension that will bring the trail up to Main Street, just north of the MBTA Station. A public hearing to review the design of this extension is anticipated in 2025; construction is expected in a few

years with federal and state funding.

2025 will be a year of many trail projects in MetroWest and beyond, with trails opening in Sudbury, Hudson and many more communities. We will have more news in the coming months.

Happy New Year (a few months late)

Did you enjoy New Year's Eve on the Cochituate Rail Trail? Both the Friends of Natick Trails and the Friends of Framingham Trails organized community celebrations. Over 2000 people enjoyed fire pits, food and entertainment in Natick. FoNT appreciates all the fire pit hosts, volunteers, performers and our sponsor, TJX Corporation.

We welcome your participation as we get ready for next time! Sign up at this page and we will get in touch when we start planning in a few months.

2024 Trails Summit

FoNT, along with the Natick Conservation Commission, Open Space Advisory Committee, and Trails and Forest Stewardship Committee hosted a Natick Trails Summit in October 2024 to promote collaboration and identify priorities for trails in Natick. We have a resources page with information that trails enthusiasts may find useful: click here to learn more and get involved.



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Eastern Acrobatics and Circus – Bringing Big Top Dreams to Life

By Jennifer Russo

If you have ever been to a circus show or any kind of Cirque du Soleil performance, you know what it's like to sit in your seat, eyes wide, looking up in awe at the gravity-defying acrobats flying around, costumes sparkling under the spotlight as they jump from the trapeze or spin on a metal circle high up in the air. Maybe your jaw dropped when you saw a performer balancing on one arm, using their feet to hold up someone else doing a handstand. You likely marveled at the sheer strength and flexibility of these unique athletes as they literally bent over backward to enthrall their audience, and for certain - you were entertained.

The whole point of the circus can be summed up by saying – What's interesting? What seems impossible? How do we push the limits of that to make the audience smile?

If you ever dreamed of learning how to accomplish these kinds of daring feats, are an athlete who wants to try a different type of fitness program, are someone who wants to improve their strength and flexibility or just happen to be a circus aficionado who wants to learn how to juggle to entertain their friends, Eastern Acrobatics and Circus (EAC) has a program for you.

Located in South Natick, EAC was founded by Jacob Skeffington, who attended two professional circus schools, the National Circus School in Montreal and the China National Acrobatics Troupe in Beijing. His love for the circus started much earlier though.

"It was really happenstance. I moved to the U.S. when I was twelve and Hilltop Circus was a program partner for a gym class I was in. I ended up going on a tour with Vermont's Circus Smirkus, and I was thoroughly hooked at that point. Having a love for music performance prior to this, it was another kind of entertainment that really spoke to me," says Jacob.

A former Cirque du Soleil performer himself, Jacob wanted to use all of the methods of training he learned throughout his experiences to create



Eastern Acrobatics

a school where he could teach these skills to people of all levels.

"There was really a void of opportunity here in the United States for people who wanted to learn high-level acrobatics and circus disciplines. It's a lot different than a standard gymnastics school in that it's less about competition and much more about performance. A lot of people that come here started in dance, gymnastics, or trampoline, but they wanted something that further enabled them to perform artistically in a different way," Jacob shares.

EAC has two full-time coaches and four part-time coaches, who all specialize in a variety of disciplines, including partner acrobatics, Mongolian contortion, tumbling, aerial rope, aerial straps and fabric, handstands, and more. They all share an enthusiasm for movement and performance that guides their teaching to students of all levels, encouraging them to embrace who they are and what they are capable of. One of the coaches recently had students win at the 47th Monte Carlo Circus Festival, one of the most renowned events in the circus world.

"Many people think that these are skills that other people just have the talent for, but really, almost anyone can learn how to do this. It's really about how much you practice.

Learning and knowing the techniques, then spending time on them with a good coach makes a dramatic difference," shares Jacob.

Classes run in 10-week group sessions. Children may begin from age two with Circus Tots

Business sp⊗tlight

classes. At age seven, they can begin Intro to Circus or General Circus classes.

Adults can take classes in any circus discipline including aerials, contortion, handstands, and partner acrobatics. There is also a class for adult stretching, for those who want to focus on becoming more flexible.

There are drop-in classes available for those who just want to try juggling or group acrobatics classes and there are full-time or part-time professional programs for those who are considering taking the skills to another level or aspiring to be professional performers.

They run recreational classes all year round and they are also



happy to be offering summer camps the week of July 14-18, which can be registered as fullday (\$795) or half-day (\$399) sessions. Camps will include warmups, group circus classes, specialty skill rotations, group games, lunch, and snacks.

Are you interested in celebrating movement as both physical exercise and as an art? Do you want to discover what your body can do and build confidence along the way?

Whether you are looking to get your child into a unique activity, want to reignite your own childhood dream of being an acrobat, or just want have fun while you improve your own fitness, EAC invites you to step out of your comfort zone and into a world where you can be the center of your own stage.

EAC is located in the former Sacred Heart church building, at 28 Eliot Street in Natick, MA. To learn more about their class offerings and schedule, coaches, and more, visit their website at www.EasternAcrobatics.com or check out their Instagram @EasternAcrobatics. They can also be reached by email info@easternacrobatics.com

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How to Control the Deadliest Animal on the Planet!

Mosquito and tick populations are on the rise again as the country transitions to the Spring season. While these pests are certainly nuisances, they can also transmit harmful diseases like Zika virus, West Nile virus, Lyme disease, and more, which is why WPC Pest Control is helping to advocate for increased awareness of mosquito and tick prevention this season.

"One of the best ways to fight off mosquito and tick bites and subsequent disease transmission is to apply insect repellent before going outside," said Jim Mazzuchelli, owner of WPC Pest Control.

Yet, many people don't make it a priority to protect against these biting pests by taking this simple action. Those who do may not realize that there is a correct way to use repellent for it to be effective.

To properly apply insect repellent for maximum protection against mosquitoes and ticks, follow this five-step method from the National Pest Management Association (NPMA):

- 1. Look for a product containing an active EPA-registered ingredient, such as DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon-eucalyptus or IR3535.
- 2. Read the product label and follow the instructions carefully. If sunscreen is



Jim Mazzuchelli, owner of WPC Pest Control

also being worn, repellent should be used over top of sunscreen.

- 3. Shake the product well. Then, hold it about 6-8 inches away from exposed skin and spray evenly in a sweeping motion.
- 4. Spray the palms of hands to apply the repellent to the face and ears, being sure to avoid eye and nostril contact.

5. Apply the repellent over clothing, which should completely cover feet and ankles.

"Another great way to avoid contact with mosquitoes specifically is to remove any standing water around the yard to deter mosquito breeding," said, Jim Mazzuchelli of WPC Pest Control.

A licensed pest control professional can work with a homeowner to help identify these hot spots. The ultimate protection would be to have your yard treated by a professional pest control operator. You will get the knowledge and protection needed to combat these dangerous threats. Your loved ones deserve it.

For more information, visit nobugsnopests.com to schedule a complete inspection and treatment.

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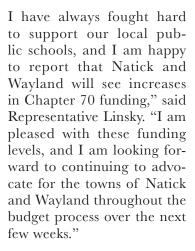
FY26 Chapter 70 Education Funding Numbers Released

Natick and Wayland receive significant increases amounts of state aid to public elementary and secondary schools.

Boston – Representative David Linsky (D-Natick) announced that the Massachusetts House of Representatives' Ways and Means Committee has released their Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) budget. With a total of \$7.3 billion going towards education across the Commonwealth, this budget reflects significant increases in education funding for cities and towns.

In addition to increases in overall Chapter 70 education funding, this FY26 budget also emphasizes the Commonwealth's commitment to special education by providing record funding in reimbursement for special education costs.

"Throughout my career,



Fifth Middlesex Funding Natick

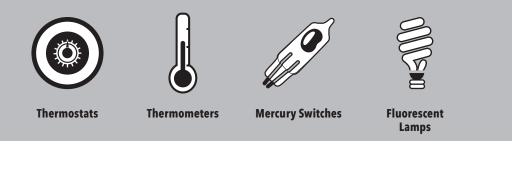
Chapter 70: \$14,509,257 (5.78% / \$793,050 increase from FY25)



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What to Expect from a Financial Advisor



Gary Shilman, Financial Advisor

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If you know how important it is to invest for your future, but you're unsure of the road to follow, you may want to get some guidance and direction from a financial professional. But if you've never worked with one before, what can you expect?

Here are some things to look for:

• Assessment – A financial advisor will assess your current financial situation – assets, income, debts and so on – but that's just the start. These days, advisors recognize the need to view their clients' lives holistically. Consequently, you will see questions like this: What are your feelings about investing? How would you judge your risk tolerance? What are your individual financial goals? What hopes and dreams do you have for your family?

- Recommendations~-~Onlyafter fully understanding your needs, goals and preferences will a financial advisor recommend any investment moves. There are no "one-size-fits-all" solutions. You may want to steer clear of individuals claiming to be financial advisors who "guarantee" big returns with no risk. In the investment world, there are few guarantees, and every investment carries some type of risk.
- **Communications** Financial professionals communicate with their clients in different ways, but you should always feel free to reach out to an advisor with

any questions or concerns. Most financial advisors will want to meet with clients at least once a year, either in person or through an online platform, to review their investment portfolios. During the review, the financial advisor will help you determine if any changes are needed. But financial advisors won't wait a full year to contact clients to discuss a particular investment move that might need to be made. Also, depending on the firm you choose, you should be able to go online to review your portfolio at your convenience.

• **Technology** – A financial advisor can employ a variety of software programs to help clients. For example, a financial advisor can determine the rate of return you might need to attain specific goals, helping shape your investment strategy. But there are also a lot of "what ifs" in anyone's life, so an advisor can use hypothetical illustrations to show you where you might end up if you take different paths, such as retiring earlier (or later) than you had planned or putting in more (or less) money toward a specific goal, such as education for your children. Anyone's plans can change, so the ability to view different potential scenarios can prove valuable.

Above all, a financial advisor can help you feel more confident as you pursue your goals. Among investors who work with a financial advisor, 84% said that doing so gave them a greater sense of comfort about their finances during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a survey conducted in 2020 by Age Wave and Edward Jones. And during times of market turbulence, such as we've experienced this year, a financial advisor can help you avoid overreacting to downturns. When unexpected events crop up, such as a lapse in employment, a financial advisor can suggest moves that may enable you to avoid major disruptions to your financial strategy. Conversely, when a new opportunity emerges, perhaps from an inheritance or some other windfall, your financial advisor can help you take advantage of it.

Navigating the investment landscape can be challenging – but the journey can be a lot smoother if you've got the right guide.

Contact Gary Shilman to discuss your financial needs, wants, and wishes.

Gary Shilman Financial Advisor Edward Jones 348 Washington Street Wellesley Hills, MA 02481 781-694-8138 Gary.Shilman@edwardjones.com

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FUNDING

continued from page 6

Local Aid: \$4,692,127 (1.98% / \$91,109 increase from FY25)

Wayland

Chapter 70: \$7,949,860 (5.367% / \$405,000 increase over FY25)

Local Aid: \$1,113,045 (1.98% / \$21,613 increase from FY25) Speaker Mariano and the House Committee on Ways & Means introduced their FY26 budget proposal on April 16, 2025, following a review of the Governor's proposal and a series of public hearings. The budget will be considered by the House of Representatives starting April 28, 2025.





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Bacon Free Library Events

Monday-Friday, 9:30-5:30 with extended hours on Tuesday until 7:00pm; Saturdays 9:30-1:30

Curbside pickup is available during all open hours

Check our website for the most upto-date information and to register for programs: https://baconfreelibrary.org

Children's Programs

All Together Preschool Storytime -- Mondays and Tuesdays @ 10am -- Join us for stories and songs! We'll be outdoors, weather permitting. Bring along a blanket to get comfy.

Note: if the weather is wet or below 55 degrees, we'll move this storytime indoors. The historic nature of our building limits accessibility. This program is also offered in an accessible location at the Morse Institute Library (check their website for dates, times, and more information).

Baby Time -- Wednesdays @

10am -- Stories, bounces, and songs for babies 0-24 months and their grownups! The historic nature of our building limits accessibility. This program is also offered in an accessible location at the Morse Institute Library (check their website for dates, times, and more information).

Jammin with You -- Fridays, May 2nd & 16th @ 10:30am -- Be prepared to laugh, dance, sing, and jam your way through 30 minutes of non-stop family fun! Well be outdoors, weather permitting. Bring along a blanket to get comfy. Note: if the weather is wet, this program will be rescheduled.

All-ages Program

Instrument Petting Zoo -in-person on the library grounds -- Sat., May 24th @ 11am-- The Bacon Free Library is partnering with Bach to Rock in Wellesley to bring you this instrument petting zoo. B2R will bring a variety of musical instruments to the BFL for 60 minutes of instrument exploration to give people of all ages a chance to learn about instruments and experience playing them. This event will be held outdoors at our picnic table.

Please stop by to try out an instrument, or two, that you're curious about. No registration required.

Adult Programs

Author Shannon Reed discusses Why Do We Read? --- Virtual program, Mon., May 5th @ 7pm on Zoom -- This program is for readers everywhere! Join us as we chat with author Shannon Reed about her latest book, Why We Read: On Bookworms, Libraries, and Just One More Page Before Lights Out. Why DO we read? What compels us to?



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What holds our attention? How many of us remember reading by a flashlight after hours? Shannon will have the scoop and will be answering lots of our questions. Register for the Zoom link.

Francais a la bibliotheque --Saturday, May 10th @ 10am --Vous parlez français? un peu, beaucoup, pas de problèmes. Venez nous rejoindre pour parler ou pour écouter.

Author Heather Wolf discusses how to experience spring bird migration to the fullest -- Virtual program, Monday, May 12th @ 7pm on Zoom -- Learn how to find more migrating birds and witness their fascinating behaviors, as well as cue into birds that will be breeding and raising young in your area. Register for the Zoom link.

Q&A with Romance and Mystery Writer Olivia Waite -- Virtual program, Mon., May 19th @ 7pm on Zoom -- Listen in or bring questions and join in to this fun conversation with romance author, Olivia Waite. Olivia has brought her blend of heart and humor to historical romance, fantasy, science fiction, and essays, so who knows where the conversation might lead! You can be sure we'll delve into her newest book, Murder by Memory, the first in the Dorothy Gentleman sci-fi mystery series. Register for the Zoom link.

How to Create a Homegrown National Park -- in-person at the BFL -- Tuesday, May 20th @ 5:30pm (rain date Tuesday, May 27th @ 5:30pm) -- Join us for a fun and informative stroll around the lovely grounds of the Bacon Free Library. Our gardening guru Monica Foley will point out and discuss the native plants in our gardens. She will offer many

practical ideas to help you encourage birds and other pollinators to your yard and to increase the biodiversity in your property. You will learn how the BFL became a Certified Wildlife Habitat, as well as the requirements to acquire a Homegrown National Park sign for your yard.

Q&A with Romance Author Nalini Singh -- Virtual program, Weds, May 28th @ 7pm on Zoom -- Join us for a lively conversation with blockbuster romance author, Nalini Singh. We'll definitely chat about her most recent Guild Hunter Series book Archangel's Ascension, and there will be spoilers - you have been warned!! Be prepared for a rapid fire Q&A about all things SparkleBell. Register for the Zoom link.

Adult Book & Film Clubs registration required for all clubs; please visit our website for details https://baconfreelibrary.org/

clubs-programs/

Mystery Book Club: Thursday, May 1st @ 1pm on Zoom History Book Club: Thursday,

May 8th @ 11am on Zoom

Environmental Book Club: Tues., May 20th-7pm on Zoom Tuesday Book Club: Tues.,

May 27th-6:30pm at the library Nonfiction Book Club: Sat.,

May 31st-10am on Zoom Cinephile Mondays -- last

Monday of the month @ 4pm on Zoom; watch and discuss films. Check the BFL website for the film of the month and to register.

Museum Passes

The Bacon Free Library and Morse Institute Library offer passes for free or reduced-admission to 30 local museums. Check one out and plan your next day trip!



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The Short Term Rental Report

Make Yourself at Home: Why Usability Is the Secret Sauce in Vacation Rentals



Dave Menapace, President

You've fluffed the pillows, stocked the fridge with local goodies, and picked out the perfect welcome mat—but is your vacation rental truly ready to wow?

Enter *usability experience*: the not-so-secret ingredient that transforms a good stay into a five-star memory. It's not just about

how pretty your place looks—it's about how intuitively it works. When guests can easily figure out how to use everything, they settle in faster, treat the home with care, and leave glowing reviews in their wake.

So, what does great usability look like in a short-term rental? Let's dive in.

Think Like a Guest (Literally—Go Stay There!)

Want to really know what works and what doesn't? Stay in your own rental for a night or two. Start from the moment you park the car. Is the entry code easy to find? Can you locate the light switches in the dark? Are towels where you'd expect them to be? This firsthand experience is like gold—it reveals pain points that guests may not voice but definitely feel.

Design With Purpose

Usability starts with design. Sure, aesthetics matter—but functionality is the real MVP. That means utensils near the stove, extra blankets in bedroom closets, and yes, the coffee machine placed where it makes sense. If guests can get what they need without asking or searching, you're doing it right.

Labels = Love

Nothing says "I care" like a clearly labeled light switch or a drawer marked "extra towels." Labels take the guesswork out of navigating a new space. They help guests feel confident and competent—which, in turn, makes them feel at home.

Essentials: Better to Overdeliver

Running out of toilet paper don

mid-stay? That's a no-go. Stocking your rental generously with necessities like paper goods, soap, and kitchen staples isn't just thoughtful—it's essential. And for larger groups? Multiply everything. No one likes fighting over the last wine glass.

Give Guests a Map (Figuratively Speaking)

Create a simple, friendly guidebook with key info: Wi-Fi password, how to use the TV, quirky appliance instructions, and house rules. A printed copy is handy, and a digital version? Even better. Think of it as a treasure map that leads straight to comfort.

The Takeaway: A House That Feels Like Home

When everything is exactly where it should be—and guests don't have to think twice—they relax. And relaxed guests are happy guests. They treat your space with respect, leave fantastic reviews, and become loyal repeat visitors.

Investing in usability isn't flashy, but it's powerful. It's the kind of behind-the-scenes magic that turns a beautiful rental into a beloved one.

So go ahead—stay in your space, label that mystery drawer, and stock up on extra towels. Your future guests will thank you. With stars.

This article was brought to you by Dave Menapace, a thought leader in short term rentals and President of The 5 Star Co-Host, LLC (www.5strcohost.com) a leading vacation rental management company in New England.

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Your Money, Your Independence

Battle of The Ages: Wealth Effect vs. Experience Spending



Glenn Brown, CFP

Saving money to invest is smart.

Planning for the future is essential.

But there's a fine line between being financially responsible and letting portfolio values drive your decisions.

One of the most subtle yet impactful traps in financial planning is the negative wealth effect.

This occurs when a sudden drop in your perceived net worth (like a dip in your 401k or home value) causes you to feel poorer, even if your actual income and financial stability haven't changed. This psychological shift often leads people to cut back on spending—not just on luxuries, but on the very experiences that bring meaning, connection, and joy to their lives.

And that's when internal and external conflicts begin.

The First To Go, But Should It?

When people react to a market downturn or economic uncertainty, one of the first things they scale back on is experience spending—travel, events, concerts, dining out, hobbies, and other non-essential but fulfilling activities.

For many, these aren't reckless purchases; they're often the things that create memories, deepen relationships, and improve well-being. Yet the negative wealth effect convinces people that now isn't the time.

"We'll go next year."

"Let's wait and host a big celebration on your <u>th</u> birthday".

"I'll take that art class when things feel more stable."

Here's the rub: markets are never stable but do come back, while specific opportunities don't.

Timing of Experiences Are Critical

Consider the family vacation to Disney, it is a different shared experience for all going when kids are 6 & 8 versus their late teens.

Or the family trip with your HS senior you're planning to do. What's their availability (and desire) once in college to go on a family trip with mom and dad? That window's closing.

You might delay a trip only to find your health, schedule, or relationships have changed.

A Psychological Toll

There's a hidden cost to delaying experience spending, and it's not just about missing out on fun. It can lead to a sense of stagnation, disconnection, and even regret. As humans, we are wired for novelty, connection, and purpose. When we constantly suppress those desires due to financial fear, even when we can afford it, we shrink our lives unnecessarily.

Over time, this pattern will increase stress and negativity which creeps into your work and relationships. What's worse, these delays rarely improve your financial picture meaningfully. Even after skipping a few celebrations or delaying a vacation, it's not going to make your 401k come back.

Don't Let Perception Steal Reality

The key is recognizing that the negative wealth effect is largely psychological. Your net worth on paper will fluctuate, but if your income, emergency savings, and long-term plans are still intact, then cutting off all experience-based spending will do more harm than good.

Ask yourself: "Is my fear based on the actual numbers or how I feel about them?"

If it's the numbers, then review your historical net worth data and if it's close to 12-24 months ago, know this happens and will happen again. Move on.

Now if it's how you feel, then consider the sources driving your fear. If you're doom-scrolling politics, maybe it's time to put the phone down, go for a walk, listen to some music and think how to move forward with your planned experience spending.

Now if your budget doesn't have planned experience spending, that's another topic for another day.

Life Moves Pretty Fast...

To paraphrase Ferris Bueller, "Life moves pretty fast, if you stop until everything feels financially perfect, you could miss it". Spending mindfully on experiences that matter isn't wasteful—it's often the best investment you can make. Oh Yeeeaah!

The opinions voiced in this material are for general information only and are not intended to provide specific advice or recommendations for any individual.

Glenn Brown is a Holliston resident and owner of Plan-Dynamic, LLC, www.PlanDynamic.com. Glenn is a fee-only Certified Financial Planner[™] helping motivated people take control of their planning and investing, so they can balance kids, aging parents and financial independence.

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Play Pickleball Against Gronk

Join the former New England Patriot on the pickleball court to fundraise for the Jimmy Fund in support of adult and pediatric cancer care and research and Gronk Nation Youth Foundation's Boston Playground

Can you spike in pickleball? Find out next month when Rob "Gronk" Gronkowski and the Gronk Nation Youth Foundation team up with Dana-Farber's Jimmy Fund to host Pickleball for a Purpose on Wednesday, May 28, from 5–8 p.m. The four highest fundraising teams, and one wildcard team, will play pickleball against Gronk and friends at Bosse, located at 310 Speen Street, Natick, Mass.

Visit www.jimmyfund.org/ gronk to sign up or for more information. Prizes from now through May 20, 2025. Sign up to fundraise as a team of two or individually. As you fundraise, vour team will unlock different prizes, like playing pickleball with Gronk or signed Gronk merchandise. You can also track your fundraising online. Not interested in playing? You can attend the event as a spectator. Please visit https://charity.pledgeit.org/ pickleball, click "Donate" and email ChloeC_Rogan@dfci.harvard.edu to receive your ticket (tickets are limited).

About the Jimmy Fund

The Jimmy Fund is comprised of community-based fundraising events and other programs that, solely and directly, benefit Dana-Farber Cancer Institute's lifesaving mission to provide

compassionate patient care and groundbreaking cancer research for children and adults. The Jimmy Fund is an official charity of the Boston Red Sox, the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association, the Pan-Mass Challenge, and the Variety Children's Charity of New England. Since 1948, the generosity of millions of people has helped the Jimmy Fund save countless lives and reduce the burden of cancer for patients and families worldwide. Follow the Jimmy Fund on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram: @ TheJimmyFund.

About Gronk Nation Youth Foundation

The Gronk Nation Youth Foundation is dedicated to inspiring youth to reach their maximum potential through sports, education, community, and fitness. Our mission is to help kids stay actively involved in school and sports and provide them with the tools needed to help them follow their dreams and live a happy and more successful life. Gronk Nation provides grants to sports programs and in addition, the Gronkowski brothers, provide appearances at events with selected nonprofit organizations that effectively serve and benefit children with an emphasis on health, education, and fitness.

Natick Artist Named Sendak Fellow

Natick-based artist and children's book illustrator Rob Dunlavey is one of four artists chosen this year to be 2025 Sendak Fellows.

The award includes a \$5000 cash stipend and a month-long residency at famed children's book illustrator Maurice Sendak's home and archive in Ridgefield, CT.

Sendak is best known for his seminal and widely loved classic picture book Where The Wild Things Are.

Sendak's hope was that the residency time will aid fellows in creating new works that are "not vapid, stupid, or sexy, but original. Work that excites and incites"

Rob Dunlavey is the illustrator of In the Woods by David Elliott, Owl Sees Owl by Laura Godwin, a School Library Journal Best Book of the Year, Whale Fall by Melissa Stewart, a Bank Street Best Book of the Year, and more. His editorial illustrations have been featured in The New York Times, The Boston Globe, Business Week, and The Los Angeles Times.

Sendak Foundation announcement: https:// www.sendakfoundation. org/2025-sendak-fellows Publishers Weekly: https:// www.publishersweekly.com/ pw/by-topic/childrens/ childrens-industry-news/article/97248-2025-sendak-fellows-announced.html

Rob Dunlavey website: https://www.robd.com/

During his time at the Sendak Foundation studios, Rob plans to focus on a dozen personal picture book ideas in various stages of completion or reassessment, an illustrated book of Italian poetry due out next Spring, and his daily landscape sketching practice.





Natick Garden Club Plant Sale 2025

The Natick Garden Club invites all interested parties to our annual PLANT SALE. Doors open 10 am - 2 pm, Sunday, June 1, 2025. Rain or shine, as the event is held indoors at the Natick Community-Senior Center, 117 East Central St., Natick, MA.

The sale is our major fundraiser for the year. We offer a variety of plants that have been proven to grow successfully in our sometimes challenging weather

conditions. Most of the plants are perennials from members' gardens, and are labeled for bloom time and season, height, spacing needed, and sun and moisture requirements. We promote native plants as well, meaning they are native to our area, and tolerant of drought conditions and excellent at providing habitat for good insects and birds. There will be a sizable houseplant section this year, thanks in part to an in-kind

estate gift. As always raffle tickets for a variety of items will be available and you need not be present to win.

All proceeds from the sale fund the Natick Garden Club, a group devoted to civic beautification and service in the Natick community. Cash, check and credit card accepted. For more information please visit us at http://www. natickgardenclub.org/ or find us on Facebook or Instagram.

BOOK A

FREE

IN-HOME

Info on our club:

Our mission is to promote a positive educational environment for sharing gardening, horticultural, and conservation information and to encourage civic planting, beautification, and service in the Natick community.

Organized in 1998 by three women, the Natick Garden Club currently has over 100 members. Members represent a range of ages, genders, and gardening acumen. All have a passion to learn, share, and volunteer in service to their garden club. The NGC has evening meetings September through May at Morse Library featuring a keynote speaker, with time for socialization and NGC



business at the start. We have deep roots in Natick although draw members from several communities, and can be found around town in a variety of capacities throughout the year. The plant sale is our main fundraiser.

EVALUATION! A/C • Heating • Water Heaters

Walk To End Homelessness

ilies sought services from FPM to stabilize their housing. This was a significant increase from 2023. As housing costs continue to rise, our state now has the highest proportion of children experiencing homelessness in the entire country. By walking with us, you help raise funds and bring hope to fami-

In 2024, more than 140 fam- lies in need. Together, we can make a difference.

Event Details:

- Sunday, May 4th
- Where: Natick High School, 15 West Street, Natick, MA 01760
- When: 12PM Check-in & activities

• What: Join us for hot dogs, hamburgers (veggie too), Kona Ice, live music from the Natick School of Rock house band, facepainting, massages, bouncy house, and more!

•We will have a short program at 1:15. The 2.3 mile walk will start at 1:30

How to Register:

• Click here to register: 2025 Walk Registration

• When registering, uncheck the box to cover processing fees-it will be covered!

• Register before April 1st to ensure you receive your preferred shirt size.

• After you register you will receive an email to set up an individual fundraising page and you can create a team page and encourage your friends and family to join or donate.

Have questions? Reach out to Shannon at shannon@familypromisemetrowest.org.



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Stucchi Landscape & Design – Creating Custom Outdoor Spaces for Every Family

By Jennifer Russo

The weather is finally starting to warm up and we are beginning to emerge from winter hibernation to venture outside for some fresh air and sun. We step out, take a deep breath, and start dreaming about our plans for summer barbeques and other outdoor get-togethers. Then, we start to recall a part of the to-do list that we have been ignoring from last year, and the year before that...our outdoor spaces deserve an upgrade!

New England winters certainly take their toll on our properties. For a lot of us, our backyards are littered with sticks and branches, our walkways may need some leveling, or our yard just isn't usable in the way we envision. It invites some inspirational ideas of what could be, but how does a property owner get started in figuring out what will work and how do they go about taking those ideas and making them real?

With spring here and summer fast approaching, many people are considering outdoor kitchens and dining spaces, raised bed planters for growing vegetables, and beautifully masoned firepits. As flowers are starting to bloom, there may be thoughts around what new plants and flora could be added to bring some assorted colors or vibrancy to the yard.

Whether it's any of these things or something like an expanded patio, a new walkway, or an oasis escape complete with a mosaic fountain, Stucchi Landscape & Design can make it happen. Working with you to understand your vision and applying their decades of experience and knowledge to walk through every step of the process, Stucchi can turn your yard into the perfect place for relaxation, enter-

Business sp⊗tlight

tainment, or the family time that you've been imagining.

For those who have purchased a home that has an existing, previously designed landscape, it still may not be what speaks to their own personality or needs – they often want to update it, expand on it, or change it entirely.

"When you've moved into a home that you intend to stay in for a long time, it's important to consider how it will be used by you and/or your family now and in the future. A well-designed landscape can transform a yard into an extension of the home in a way that works best for you. You may want a safe area for a swing set if you have younger kids, or a pool for summer entertaining," says owner Jim Stucchi.

"Maybe your children have moved out and now is the time for a more relaxing patio or deck space and a garden. Those who have existing underground wells and sprinkler systems are often worried that it's an end-all, be-all that prevents them from achieving the design that they really want in their yards, but it can all be worked with. There really are so few limits to what's possible."

Whatever the project may be, Stucchi Landscaping & Design takes a completely comprehensive approach to ensure that everything is evaluated.

"We work hard to ensure that each space works with the owner's lifestyle, and we take every detail into account. We pride ourselves on getting everything right. Our designs include consideration of irrigation and drainage, fertilization, noise, sun





Photos courtesy of Chris Rucinski

orientation, maintenance, and more. Every client is unique, and we take the time to listen to what they want to achieve with their space. Our approach is thoughtful and forward-thinking. We work to ensure the finished project is a true success for years to come," shares Jim.

Stucchi ensures that the work is done beautifully and fits perfectly with the rest of the space, and in most cases the changes can increase the overall value of the home by up to 25%. If you have an idea for how you want to reinvent or upgrade your outdoor space or need help with an inspired design to maximize your property's potential, now is the time to reach out.

With over 25 years of landscape design experience built on a foundation of trust and integrity, Jim not only serves his customers but also supports the communities he works with. Jim is a longstanding board member for the Metrowest YMCA, a current member of the Keefe Technical High School Landscape/ Horticulture Advisory Board and has served as President of the Massachusetts Nursery and Landscape Association.

774-233-2151

UCCHI

stucchilandscape.com

Stucchi Landscape & Design is based in Holliston and offers services all around New England. Projects are customized to a client's goals, timeline and budget. To learn more or to begin bringing your outdoor vision to life, visit stucchilandscape.com or call 774-233-2151 to book a consultation.

PAID ADVERTISEMENT





Masonic Project Delta comes to Natick



Meridian Masonic Lodge of Natick, along with Project Delta on March 27th presented to the Natick Police Department, knapsacks full of Teddy Bears to be carried in each of the Natick police cruisers. These teddy bears could be given to children when there is a traumatic event happening to limit the trauma and take their attention away from stressful scenes.

We are proud to say that the kits are in the cruisers and ready for their first shift. Pictured from left to right senior Warden of Meridian Lodge Nicholas Enzmann, Chaplain Edwin Sloper, Master Jay Snyder, Chief Hicks, Mark Aubuchon Delta Project and Lieutenant Howard.



Natick Academy of Performing Arts Brings the Magical Musical 'Between The Lines' to the Stage

2 Performances ONLY! May 3rd and 4th at MassBay Community College, Wellesley

What happens when you combine a fairy tale loving teenage bookworm with a dashing prince and a dose of vibrant pop music? You get the magical, mystical, musical world of Between The Lines, the latest production to hit the Natick Academy of Performing Arts (NAPA) stage. Performances are May 3 and 4 at MassBay Community College in Wellesley.

Between The Lines is a heartwarming new musical that follows Delilah, a teenage bookworm who escapes the challenges of high school by diving into her favorite fairy tale-only to discover the prince in the story can actually speak to her! As their worlds begin to intertwine, Delilah must learn to write her own story, discovering the power of choice, imagination, and selflove along the way. According to Director Holly Chin, NAPA Founder and Artistic Director, bringing a relatively new musical to audiences is not only fun but also sends a message. "It's so important for kids to be exposed to new shows and to have the amazing opportunity to create their own characters on stage- characters that audiences haven't seen before," said Chin.

While a relatively new title, Chin says Between The Lines won't be totally unfamiliar to audiences. "This musical is a mixture of 'Enchanted,' 'Mean Girls,' and 'Dear Evan Hansen,' revealed Chin. "It's a tale of teenage angst and fairy tale escape, with a high level of pop dance. It's very fun!"

Between The Lines features a cast of 13 students from NA-PA's Elite teen program, ranging in age from 13 – 18 years old, from Natick and Wayland. Cast members are Addy Lynch, Caroline Doyle, Carolyn Mac-Donnell, Gabrielle Walsh, Haley Kennedy, June Verghese, Maddy Pogue, Magnolia Blackman, Molly Leshowitz, Patrick Tinsley, Sadie Klau and Talia Kramer from Natick; and Emillie Stein of Wayland.

Performances will be held on Saturday, May 3 at 7 pm and Sunday, May 4 at 1 pm at MassBay Community College, 50 Oakland Street, Wellesley, MA. Tickets range from \$16 for seniors and children under 12, to \$21 for adults. BETWEEN THE LINES runs approximately 2 hours and is recommended for ages 9 and up due to some mild language. For tickets and information, visit www.napastage.org.

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MAPC Receives \$1 Million to Expand Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure, Access

The funds will help pilot the deployment of non-grid tied charging solutions and expanded EV carsharing

BOSTON - April 10, 2025 - With adoption of electric vehicles among underserved populations in Massachusetts falling behind in the Massachusetts auto market and lingering concerns around access to electric vehicle (EV) charging, there is a need to explore lower cost, non-grid charging solutions across communities. With a \$1 million Accelerating Clean Transportation for All, Round 2 (ACT4All 2) grant from the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC), the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) will work with Framingham, Natick, and Quincy and the Housing Authorities of Boston, Chelsea, and Somerville to pilot innovative EV charging systems that are not connected to local power grids, in conjunction with EV carsharing expansion.

Municipally owned parking areas and public housing authorities offer promising opportunities to site EV charging in closer proximity to populations currently underserved by existing EV charging infrastructure. However, housing authorities and municipalities have reported significant challenges with installing permanent Level 2 chargers, including: extensive delays in participating in utility make-ready programs; high costs for grid-connected infrastructure; complexity of ownership and rate setting; and uncertainty around siting and utilization.

This pilot will utilize nongrid tied charging solutions such as solar-powered charging, battery operated charging, and charging-as-a-service with EV carsharing, allowing for rapid deployment across the municipalities and housing authorities as they plan for and scale permanent, grid-tied EV charging in the long run.

"EV car sharing presents a substantial opportunity for residents who have not yet been able to fully adopt EV technologies due to their higher costs and lack of access to charging equipment," said MAPC Principal Planner & Emerging Technologies Specialist Alison Felix, AICP. "It offers an expedited and low-cost entry to EVs and reduces the need for single car ownership, which in turn reduces greenhouse gas emissions."

The EV carshare vehicles will be available to rent at a discounted rate to eligible users. The project team will partner with local tenant associations and community-based organizations to robustly engage with and educate potential users about the project and the availability of shared EVs. Beyond offering discounted rentals, the EV carshare partners will also support outreach, education, and data collection efforts for the pilot. Municipalities and housing authorities will own, lease, or contract the charging solutions, and the EV carshare partners will own and operate the vehicles.

"EV charging matters in every community - from suburban neighborhoods to city centers to rural farms," said Jillian Wilson Martin, Sustainability Director for the Town of Natick. "You can't charge without power, but the best locations for charging don't always align with existing grid infrastructure. As Massachusetts works to expand housing and advance climate goals, the flexibility, resiliency and scalability of off-grid charging will become increasingly important. Natick is eager to participate in this pilot and to support solutions that can be replicated

across the Commonwealth."

"Expanding EV charging access in public housing communities is a crucial step toward ensuring every Boston resident can benefit from clean transportation solutions," said Boston Housing Authority Administrator Kenzie Bok. "This pilot program will help us bring innovative charging and mobility options to our communities, while complementing BHA's efforts to improve building efficiency and expand renewable energy."

The ACT4All 2 grant will also empower project partners to develop plans and best practices for procuring and deploying permanent charging infrastructure at the sites with highest utilization, as well as plans to redeploy non-grid tied charging solutions to other sites and share learnings with other municipalities and housing authorities.



Sports

Team Chemistry Big Key For NHS Softball Success

By KEN HAMWEY Staff Sports Writer

Brenna Keefe has set three goals for her Natick High softball team and they all seem like they're realistic to achieve.

"Our first objective is to solidify team chemistry," she said. "Our second goal is to contend for the Bay State Conference's Carey Division title, and our third goal is to qualify for a berth in the Division 1 state tourney."

The 31-year-old Keefe, who's in his third season as the Redhawks coach, is acutely aware that her first goal — promoting and building team chemistry — is crucial if Natick hopes to battle for the division championship and be eligible for post-season play.

"We lost six seniors from last year's team," Keefe noted. "But, we've got seven returnees, five of whom are starters. We have some inexperience but what I want is for the girls to understand what's required to progress and grow, not just for themselves, but also for the team."

Keefe, whose squad was 10-11 last season, has guided the Redhawks to a pair of playoff berths. Last year, NHS defeated Medford in its opener then lost to Central Catholic. Natick may have some inexperience but its team strengths are impressive.

"Our players have a high softball IQ, they're athletic and skilled," said Keefe. "We also have a coachable group that's versatile. Our hitting and fielding are assets but we need to build our pitching depth. Our returnees are experienced but our staff will focus on helping new players navigate their athletic journey."

At Local Town Pages deadline, the Redhawks had a 2-2 record.

Natick's three captains are not only top-notch leaders, but also high-caliber competitors who get results. They include senior Jayme Kiley (centerfielder) and juniors Katie McMahon (shortstop) and Liesl Niedermeyer (first base, third base). Kiley hit .470 last year and had 31 putouts; Mc-Mahon hit .471, had three home runs and knocked in 30 runs; and Niedermeyer hit .354 and stole nine bases.

After the team's first four games, the trio has amassed some incredible hitting stats. McMahon was hitting .727, Niedermeyer had a .692 average, and Kiley's batting average was .615.

"Jayme is a strong, power hitter," Keefe said. "A great fielder, she's got good range and an incredible arm. She's a two-time captain who leads by example and by being communicate and supportive. A four-year veteran, she'll be playing for Keene State (N.H.) next year."

McMahon also leads by example and is very supportive of her teammates. "Katie is a power hitter who's fast in the field," Keefe said. "A smooth fielder, she makes difficult plays, reads the field well and has very good instincts."

Niedermeyer, who's fielding average was .871 last year, is labeled "a quiet leader," by her coach. "Liesl is a spray hitter who's versatile, able to play either first base or third base," Keefe said. "A consistent fielder, she's quick and has confidence at the plate and in the field."

Junior Caitlyn Russell is Natick's top pitcher, compiling an 8-3 record last year with an earned-run average of 4.26. A right-hander, she struck out 102 batters last year, and had 100 strikeouts as a freshman playing for the jayvees. Through four games this season, Russell had two wins and 22 strikeouts in 19 innings.

"Caitlyn relies on a fastball, change-up, curve and a riser, Keefe said. "Consistent, dedicated and eager to improve, her velocity reached 58 mph last year. Her control is good, throwing most fastballs and change-ups."

Senior Cami Smith patrols right field. "Cami is incredibly fast," Keefe said. "A smart base-runner, she's a sneaky bunter. A good hitter, she had a



Natick coach Brenna Keefe with her captains, from left, Katie McMahon, Liesl Niedermeyer, and Jayme Kiley.

.346 batting average last year. A fine fielder, she's got good range and a strong arm."

Sophomore Juliette Salvi played second base last year and got some experience catching. In 20 innings behind the plate, she had only two passed balls.

"Juliette played on the varsity as a freshman," Keefe noted. "She had a batting average of .333, scored 13 runs and knocked in 12. Our starting catcher now, she blocks the plate effectively, is strong on defense and has a strong arm throwing out runners at second base. Her confidence has grown as a catcher and she's a calming influence for our pitchers."

Keefe is relying on coachable, dedicated freshmen and sophomores who played on the junior varsity last year to round out her lineup.

Four assistant coaches comprise Keefe's staff — varsity aides Roni Pitts and Lucia Cavacini (pitchers and catchers), jayvee coach Lynne Tartaglia and her assistant (Jeff Wright). "They're all hard-working, they're dedicated and passionate about softball," Keefe emphasized.

Keefe's athletic philosophy is a combination of being competitive with a desire to win, to reach one's potential and to have fun. She also hopes that a positive atmosphere will help her players learn valuable life lessons during their varsity careers. "Life lesson that can be learned from sports are how to overcome adversity, to be resilient, to set goals, to be good teammates and leaders and to accept responsibility and accountability," she noted.

If Natick's team chemistry meshes quickly, then the season should be successful with a tournament berth secured. And, Brenna Keefe no doubt would be delighted to see her forces make it three tourney appearance in a row.

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508-879-3290

A Beginner's Guide to Gardening



John McHugh

REAL ESTATE INSIGHTS

Through the many years of my real estate career working with many first-time homebuyers, I've witnessed the excitement and joy of finding the perfect home and making it one's own. While many first-time home buyers cannot immediately undertake renovations or major improvements, there are still many ways to put their own stamp on a new property. Starting a garden for the first time has been a topic of conversation for many. To help interested people get started, I've compiled some valuable tips and insights to make your gardening journey a success. Try some of these tips out and let me know what kind of luck you have!

Start Small

Begin with a small plot or consider gardening in pots or raised beds. This approach allows you to focus your efforts and maintain control, reducing stress and anxiety. Starting small also enables you to learn and adapt as you go.

Select the Right Plants

Choose plants that are easy to care for and require minimal maintenance. Perennial flowers, succulents, hostas, and daylilies are excellent options. Annuals can also be a great choice, allowing you to create a fresh look each year. Consider your local climate and soil type when selecting plants.

Think Beyond Plants

Incorporate non-plant features to add visual interest and create a unique design statement. Stones, gravel, bird feeders, birdbaths, and garden statues can all contribute to a beautiful and low-maintenance outdoor space.

Grow Your Own Food

Consider investing time in growing food or herbs. Tomatoes, mint, rosemary, basil, and cilantro are all great options. Growing your own food can save you money and allow you to control the amount of pesticides and chemicals used in the growing process. Avid Natick gardener Robbin Gildawie says: be practical; plant herbs! If you need ground cover, use rosemary, thyme, creeping thyme, or lemon balm. Good companion flowers with these herbs are marigolds, lavender, and chives for the lovely flower it blooms. Your investment will return every year.

Tips for Success

To succeed in your gardening journey, keep the following tips in mind:

- Ensure your soil is well-draining and rich in nutrients.
- Water your plants regularly, but avoid overwatering.
- Mulch around your plants to retain moisture and suppress weeds.
- Don't be afraid to experiment and try new things.

Gardening can be a rewarding experience, and with these simple tips and tricks, you can enjoy a beautiful and thriving outdoor space. By starting small, selecting the right plants, thinking beyond plants, and growing your own food, you'll be well on your way to creating a garden that brings you joy and satisfaction. Give it a try and see how it goes!

Reach out if you would like a complimentary market analysis and pricing for your property! John McHugh has been a Senior Agent with Coldwell Banker for 24 years. 978.902.5646 JohnSellsNow@Gmail.com Visit My Website for homebuying/homeselling tips and to search all properties: JohnMcHughRealEstate.com

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For Seniors Who Want an "Easier" Home, Nina Sable is Your Guide



Nina Sable, with William Raveis Real Estate in Natick, has extensive experience working with seniors who are planning to sell their homes.

BY LINDA CHUSS

Nina Sable has worked with many seniors in her real estate practice with William Raveis in Natick, and before, that in her elder care career. She has seen the challenges elderly home-



owners face with their living situations. As she describes it, at some point, the work to maintain a house becomes too much. The wonderful memories associated with a home are reasons to stay, but the required effort can offset that joy.

In addition to nostalgia, other aspects keep senior homeowners from taking action. Sable said, "Some people think their home condition isn't well-suited for selling and they aren't excited about fixing it up. I explain why they don't need to.

"First, William Raveis has a beneficial 'Refresh' program. A company representative goes to the house and helps determine what's needed to best sell it. They'll arrange for the work to be done, but the owner doesn't pay for it until the house sells; it's then the expenses are deducted from the proceeds. For the homeowner, that's easier financially and ensures the right updates are made, with minimal effort. Plus, the sales price typically ends up higher than what the owner anticipated.

"Another point is that now is an excellent time to sell. There is a flurry of buyers, and not enough homes. Smaller homes are especially in demand right now and buyers are competing for them.

"Even beyond smaller homes, the market for sellers is strong right now. I recently sold a beautiful and unique contemporary home for an elderly woman who was moving to an out-of-state continuing care community. It needed clearing out, so I connected her with a decluttering agency."

Often older owners have many items they no longer need and figuring out what to do with them can be overwhelming. Sable said, "I can put the homeowner in touch with specialists who make that process much easier.

"It also can be hard for the owner to decide where to go next and can take someone awhile to figure out. From my experience, I have valuable contacts who can help. I've been working with a long-term-care placement professional, who's a great resource.

"Because it's a multistep process, rather than delay taking action, it will feel better to get started. I advise contacting me early on, long before you think you're ready to sell, to leverage the resources I have and make it easier for yourself."

As a way to share more about the process with a greater number of seniors, Sable is planning for in-person educational events, where homeowners can learn more.

"And I'd like to add sessions for other situations, such as probate and will sales," she said.0 If someone passes away and their home needs to be sold, it's similar to what I do for seniors who are transitioning to a more manageable place to live. One added consideration with will or probate sales is that dealing with courts and lawyers adds complexity and takes longer. A year or more is typical. My main advice is like what I tell seniors transitioning to new living accommodations: start early on so you can take advantage of my resources to help. For example, in cases where the home needs to sell more quickly, I work with investment buyers."

Clients appreciate Sable's diligence. "Nina was outstanding," said J.M., whose home Sable recently sold. "Nina's best attribute is that she is accessible and always willing to go the 'extra yard' for her clients ... My priorities became her priorities."

For more information, visit sablesellshomes.com, or contact Sable at (508) 733-8935 or nina. sable@raveis.com.

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Recent Natick Home Sales



Ì			1982 9/
	Date	Natick	Amount
	04/17/2025	18 Pleasant St.	\$1,320,000
	04/17/2025	14 Wayside Road	\$1,580,000
	04/16/2025	81 Pond St.	\$800,000
	04/16/2025	44 W Central St.	\$980,000
	04/15/2025	8 Greenleaf Road	\$1,950,000
	04/14/2025	74 Farwell St.	\$2,150,000
	04/14/2025	62 E Central St. #203	\$375,000
	04/14/2025	42 Winter St.	\$2,250,000
	04/10/2025	17 Parker Court	\$1,080,000
	04/08/2025	15 Proctor St.	\$1,650,000
	04/08/2025	45 Hopewell Farm Road	\$1,580,000
	04/08/2025	95 S Main St. #B	\$1,400,000
	04/07/2025	20 2nd St.	\$1,680,000
	04/07/2025	2 Wyndemere Lane	\$2,300,000
	04/07/2025	95 S Main St. #A	\$1,480,000
	04/03/2025	53 Bacon St.	\$936,000
	04/01/2025	10 Coolidge Avenue	\$1,630,000
	03/31/2025	22 Stratford Road	\$875,000
	03/31/2025	29 Indian Ridge Road	\$950,000
	03/31/2025	3 Oxbow Road	\$820,000
	03/31/2025	11 Deer Path	\$1,700,000
	03/31/2025	56 Washington St.	\$1,130,000
	03/28/2025	28 Charles St.	\$925,000
	03/28/2025	32 Indian Ridge Road	\$1,130,000
	03/28/2025	1 Cheryl Road	\$999,000
	03/27/2025	46 Wethersfield Road	\$1,850,000
	03/27/2025	4 Retrop Road	\$1,230,000
	03/24/2025	30 Lakeview Avenue	\$1,350,000
	Source: zillow.com	Compiled: Local Town Pages	

Source: zillow.com Compiled: Local Town Pages

508.740.2328 marcyblocker.com marcy.blocker@nemoves.com



The 4-bed 3-bath 2,700-square-foot house at 18 Pleasant Street in Natick recently sold for \$1,320,000. Image credit: www.zillow.com

Looking to advertise your business? Contact Susanne: 508-954-8148 sue@sodellconsult.com



